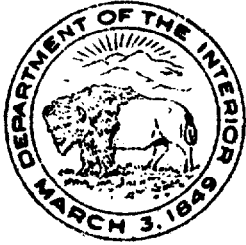


*office
file*



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release JULY 7, 1956

**FWS AWARDS CONTRACTS FOR RESEARCH ON GULF SHRIMP
AND SPONGE AND PACIFIC TUNA PROBLEMS**

Three research contracts for projects to study problems in the tuna, shrimp, and sponge industries have recently been awarded by the Fish and Wildlife Service, Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton said today. The work is part of the Saltonstall-Kennedy program to increase production and markets in the domestic fishing industry.

Two of the projects, one an investigation of Florida commercial sponges and the other an investigation of the causes and prevention of "black spot" on shrimp, will be conducted by the Marine Laboratory of the University of Miami. The third, an oceanographic investigation of the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean for the benefit of the tuna industry, will be made by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography of La Jolla, California.

The scene of the oceanographic study, the tropical Pacific west of Central America, is the big fishing area for the American tuna fleet. The purpose of the study is to make it possible to forecast the time and area for good tuna fishing and so provide a scientific basis for increasing the efficiency of the tuna fishery.

Since tuna presence and abundance is dependent to a great extent upon food supply, and since plankton, which is the chief direct or indirect food source for ocean fish, is affected by water conditions, the many phenomena which affect water conditions will come within the scope of the study.

Among the things which bring about the fluctuations in the abundance of plankton are the chemical nutrients brought to the surface by "upwelling" of water from the lower reaches of the ocean and by the retention of fertile water in the "interface" between ocean currents. Hence the waters of the Baja California, Tehuantepec, and Panama upwellings and the interface between the Peru Current and the Gulf of Panama water will be subject to various physical and chemical examinations. The behavior and the relationship of tuna to the changes in water conditions

will also be studied. The contract price with the Scripps Institution for an initial phase of the study is \$35,000.

"Black spot" in shrimp is a condition which became evident when shrimp fishermen began operations in shrimping areas located several days offshore in the Gulf of Mexico. While black spot carries no health hazards it does tend to lower the consumer acceptability of the product and to lower its value accordingly. The condition does not appear in the shrimp which are taken close to the Gulf ports and which are utilized within two or three days.

When black spot appears it is after the uncooked shrimp have been on ice for several days. In an effort to learn when it occurs and exactly what is the contributing factor to this condition, technologists will study every phase of the shrimp operations from the time the shrimp are caught until they are ready for use. The contract price with the University of Miami for this work is \$19,900.

The sponge research contract with the University of Miami is for \$12,000. It is an extension of a \$20,000 contract negotiated last year. This is a general investigation of the Florida commercial sponge resource. Specific attention is to be paid to the location and extent of the grounds, distribution, rate of reproduction and growth, the effect of nonselective harvesting, the effectiveness of the Federal minimum-size law, environmental factors and sponge diseases.

X X X